

44/25-118
JESUS the KING of Kings.

A
S E R M O N

Preached

At LIVERPOOL,

On the 22d Day of SEPTEMBER 1761.

Being the Day of the CORONATION of their
Majesties King GEORGE the Third, and
Queen CHARLOTTE.

*Also I will make Him my First-born, higher than the
Kings of the Earth, PSAL. lxxxix. 27.*

Published at the earnest Desire of those who heard it.

By JOHN JOHNSON. //

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Prov. viii. 15, 16.

*By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.
By me princes rule, and nobles, even all
the judges of the earth.*

ALL scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is the voice of the SPIRIT of TRUTH. But who the HOLY GHOST is pleased to personate in the sacred oracles, it behoves us diligently to attend to, by comparing *spiritual things with spiritual*; or by comparing one part of the divine testimony with another. For, without understanding by whom, or in whose name, a sentence is uttered, we cannot know the mind of GOD therein contained; and, consequently, we cannot be edified, or enjoy the benefit of such a part of the heavenly counsel.

The author of the words before us, is called WISDOM; not as a quality or endowment, for, as such, wisdom may exist in creatures, and be applied to many things; but as a personal proper name; in which sense it belongs to none but the SON of GOD. *I WISDOM dwell with prudence.* And, in another place, the HOLY GHOST calls him, CHRIST *the wisdom of GOD.*

And the characters which he bears, and the works ascribed to him, thro' the first part of the book of *Proverbs*, and particularly in this chapter, are such as cannot be true of any being but the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He says, *I lead in the way of righteousness,—that I may cause them that love me to inherit substance, &c.* None but EMMANUEL can lead in the way of righteousness, for he only is *The LORD our righteousness*; and GOD has given him for *A leader and commander to the people*. Neither can any other cause to inherit substance; seeing he is *Heir of all things*, and it pleased the FATHER that in him should all fulness dwell. Again, speaking of his eternity with GOD, he says, *I was daily his delight, &c.* But GOD never did express any delight in any being, (as an original) but his beloved SON; and if he has expressed any delight in any of his works or creatures, it is only as they stand in relation or subordination to the SON of his love, in whom he expresses the highest pleasure and satisfaction: *Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.* And, *This is my beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased.* Further, speaking of the sons of men, he says, *Who so findeth me, findeth life.* But no soul ever found life in any but the CHRIST of GOD; for he only is the life. GOD bath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his SON. He that bath the SON, bath life;

life ; and he that hath not the SON of GOD, hath not life.

If it be objected, that the *wisdom* here represented, cannot be the SON of GOD, the everlasting FATHER of his church, because it so frequently appears in the character, and speaks the language, of a female ;—I reply, This is no diminution of the excellency of his dignity, nor does it carry in it the least force of argument to prove, that any other being is here personated ; for JESUS is *all in all* ; and fills all relations to his church. Not only father, brother, husband, &c. but *mother* also. He is frequently compared to females ; as the eagle, the hen, &c. nourishing their young.—To a woman in her pangs ; *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* And his word is compared to milk for new-born babes. Yea, the LORD, when speaking of himself, uses the same mode of speech, *WISDOM is justified of all her children.*

So, I am well assured, it is the LORD REDEEMER, and no other, who hath pronounced these words, *By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.*

In treating the subject at this time, in order that some impressions may be made upon our minds, suitable to the solemnity of the day, as well as some abiding admonitions for our future conduct, I shall attempt,

I. To

I. To give a short explanation of the words.

II. To shew, that all government and dominion is in the hand of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

III. To prove, that CHRIST sets up, sustains, and regulates all the powers upon earth, in subserviency to the welfare his church.

IV. To draw some practical inferences.

I. In the first place. The words point out all the branches of government which are exercised in the earth ; and the LORD of Glory claims an absolute sovereignty thro' all. As for kings, their title, office, and dignity, needs no explanation ; all persons know, that a king is a monarch, a sovereign, or supreme governor, in a nation, country, or large dominion ; and that to him it belongs to make and establish laws for the regular government of his subjects ; as also to hold the balance of state, or to direct all matters of peace, war, commerce, or whatever is necessary for the defence, protection, or benefit of his people ; and likewise to judge and regulate all matters among his subjects, so as that they may live in peace among themselves. As for princes, what-

whatever be the modern regulation of titles and dignities; princes, in scripture language, are either heads of tribes, or governors of particular countries, where there is no king; or they are next in authority to the king; either in being his counsellors, holding governments, or assisting in making and establishing laws. So that, according to the scripture sense, the *British House of Peers* is a house of princes, whose office and work is to make laws, or to decree justice. And tho' *noble*, be a title more indefinite, yet, in general, we understand, those who had it were worthy persons, above the rank of the common people, and intrusted with the affairs of government. Such are our *Representatives in Parliament*, or *House of Commons*; who are united with the king and his princes in the legislative power. Thus our laws, statutes, and decrees of justices, are under the direction of the king, princes, and nobles.

But, further, as the king has upon his hand all the affairs of state, to guide and manage, which it is not possible for him to perform alone, those ministers of state, and high officers, who hold places of importance under his majesty, are another order of princes; whose work is more properly to rule in judgment, than decree justice. To whom may be added, all such as are in authority under the prime administration, to regulate affairs in counties, cities, or any offices

offices for the general good of the nation ; who may justly bear the character of nobles, ruling in the state.

Again, as the king is the supreme judge, and under him there are chief judges, who preside in the superior courts, these justly claim the character of princes in their high stations. And, besides these, the judges of inferior courts, governors of corporations, justices of the peace, &c. these, being placed in judicial authority, may bear the character of *nobles of the people*. And, that nothing may be omitted, the words of my text are expressed in the most comprehensive terms, *Yea, all the judges of the earth*.

So that it is manifest, *the LORD of Glory* intends to give us to understand, That all sovereigns, rulers, governors, magistrates, or whosoever holds any place of authority, or command, among the people, of whatever kind or degree, are by his appointment, and under his direction ; maintained by his power, and accountable to him for their conduct. For this word, *By me*, fully implies, that he holds all jurisdiction in his own hand ; being KING of kings, LORD of lords, GOVERNOR of governors, and JUDGE of judges. Which brings me to consider, and attempt to prove,

II. In the second place, That all government and dominion is in the hand of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

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1. The LORD JESUS is sovereign Lord of all the creation of GOD ; therefore he disposes of all government as he pleases ; and neither his honour, nor his goodness to his subjects, can admit him to suffer any power to usurp his dominion ; or wrest his authority out of his hand. Nor can any created wisdom elude his Omniscience, or any force resist his Omnipotence : neither can neglect or disregard give opportunity for any to intrude upon the property of him who neither *slumbers nor sleeps*. — GOD the FATHER made promise to his SON, saying, *I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*. And to the kings and judges of the earth he gives this instruction, *Kiss the SON lest he be angry*. The HOLY GHOST witnesseth, *The FATHER loveth the SON, and hath given all things into his hand*. And the SON acknowledgeth, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*. And inasmuch as *all things were created by him, and for him*, and the whole church is united in declaring, *Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created* ; therefore, they are not left to others, nor the government devoted to the pleasure of men. *The LORD sitteth king for ever ; GOD is judge himself*.

2. Since the LORD maintains his own sovereignty, *There is no power but of GOD* ; yet, men are advanced to the seats of government ; therefore it follows of consequence, that *the powers that be,*

are ordained of GOD. The LORD hath made manifest this truth, in his word, in that he hath given directions to kings and judges, and commanded obedience to them. *Thou shalt do according to the sentence which they of that place (which the LORD shall chuse) shall shew thee, and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee.* If GOD had not appointed the power, obedience thereto had not been our duty, nor disobedience any crime in his sight; but now, disobedience to governors is a crime so heinous, that GOD hath said, *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of GOD; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.*

3. Be it observed, that government, and legislative power, did not proceed from man's wisdom and prudence, but was originally appointed by the direction and command of GOD; not only to the tribes of Israel, whom the LORD was pleased to govern by a special system of laws, in a peculiar manner, but to the whole world. We read not of any government before the flood, nor have we any reason to believe the antediluvians knew any such thing; for want whereof, *the earth was filled with violence*: which grievance, the virtue and prudence of mankind, during so long a period, had never found an expedient to remedy. But after the flood, GOD appointed justice to be executed by mankind. For as *Noah* was now the common father of all men in the new world, whatever promise or

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precept GOD gave to him, was universal to all his race ; therefore, this precept, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, is an universal statute. And here the foundation of government is laid ; for no statute of justice can be executed without some order, authority, and form of government : he, therefore, who made the law, gave authority for the execution thereof, ordained magisterial power, and committed judicial and executive power to mankind ; for, *GOD is not the author of confusion*.

4. The Supreme JUDGE of all the earth has ordained, that there shall be powers for the adjusting of human affairs, defending the innocent, and executing judgment upon the wicked ; nor has he left it at uncertainty, who shall be employed in performing so great a trust, but he appoints the very persons, and establishes them in their high stations. It is not only a general institution, but directed by the special providence of GOD, respecting every individual whom GOD is pleased to promote to have the dominion, sway the sceptre, or hold the reins of government. *Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south ; but GOD is the Judge : He putteth down one, and setteth up another*. It is true, GOD does not call them by name in every nation, as he frequently did in Israel, but in a providential way, by an over-ruling hand ; by such means as his wisdom is pleased to direct. But whatever be the means

whereby persons are promoted, whether it be their family and birth, as was the case with *Solomon*, and all the succeeding kings of *Judah*; or by GOD's bestowing upon them some superior qualifications, and making those qualifications conspicuous, so as to gain the approbation of the people, which was the case with *Jeroboam*, and many of the kings of *Israel*; or in whatever way, still the KING of kings, and LORD of lords, claims his own prerogative, and obliges the most puissant monarchs to confess, *that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.* And though *Daniel* said to *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Thou, O king, art a king of kings*; yet he still reminds him, by what tenure he held that dignity, *for the GOD of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory*; and GOD frequently calls him, *Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant.* GOD declares, that it was himself that raised up *Pharaoh*; and he commanded *Elijah* to anoint *Hazael* to be king over *Syria*. He likewise saith of *Cyrus*, *He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure*; calls him his anointed, and says, *I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.*

5. It is the LORD CHRIST that bestows all princely qualifications, and makes men fit for high stations, gives them a capacity to hold governments, and guide the grand machines of state. There is
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not in every man wisdom, courage, conduct, penetration, resolution, coolness, vivacity, stability, &c. fit to undertake matters of such moment. But the SON of GOD, *Knowing that the FATHER hath given all things into his hands, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the SON of man*, he communicates all necessary qualifications to which soever of the sons of men he pleases; and recalls them when he pleases. So we find, when Saul was anointed king, *The spirit of GOD came upon him*. But when he had disobeyed the commandment of the LORD, and GOD had determined to rent the kingdom from him, and had anointed *David* to be king in his stead; *The SPIRIT of the LORD came upon David, from that day forward.* — *But the SPIRIT of the LORD departed from Saul.* We are not here to understand the SPIRIT of GOD in a new testament sense, as the promised comforter; for where he is given in that capacity, he abides for ever; nor as the SPIRIT of holiness, or the fear of the LORD; for this spirit *Saul* never had in truth; and that *David* had it before he was anointed king, is evident from the remark which the LORD made to *Samuel*, concerning him and his brethren: *The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.* But it intends a spirit of magnanimity, wisdom, fortitude, and judgment, to qualify them for the kingdom; which when *Saul* had lost, he was troubled with a spirit which

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was quite the reverse ; which plainly appears to be a weak, melancholy, peevish, fractious, jealous frame of mind, or an utter discomposure of the intellectual powers, whereby he was rendered unfit for government. So, it is very evident, GOD had indued *Nebuchadnezzar* with great qualifications, formed but for majesty, and royal government ; but when he misimproved those favours, GOD pronounced a different sentence upon him : *Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given him.* — It is recorded, that *Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom.* And this is given as the reason why *the children of Israel hearkened unto him.* *Solomon's request to GOD,* was, *Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people.* Which request, GOD having granted him, it is observed of the people, *They feared the king ; for they saw that the wisdom of GOD was in him to do judgment.*

6. The principles of justice and truth, goodness and mercy, whereby kings and princes are made a blessing to their subjects, are all derived from the fountain of government, JESUS CHRIST. *David saith, The GOD of Israel saith, the Rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of GOD.* But this cannot proceed from themselves, for the hearts of all men, by nature, are corrupt ; *They are all gone aside ; they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no not one.* It is this depravity in the human

human nature, that makes government absolutely necessary ; and if it had not been the good pleasure of GOD to qualify some persons with virtuous principles, from the source of his own goodness, to suppress the vicious principles and practices which otherwise would prevail and tyrannize in the world, there would be none to do it ; the foundation of government would be destroyed : the root of all power and dominion, centers in this single point, *The LORD reigneth*. And hence it is that all earthly kings and potentates are qualified to execute their important offices ; they receive from him, not only their commissions, but their instructions, and their capacities for the execution of them. And hence, as says the apostle *Paul*, *He is the minister of GOD to thee for good*. But this may be wrought different ways. One may be, as it was with *Cyrus*, who did not know the LORD, yet GOD made him a minister of good to his people ; for though we do not learn that ever he came to know the LORD, so as to become a true worshipper, yet he was brought to understand, that the LORD GOD of heaven had made him king of all the earth ; and hereby was he brought to obey his commandment, concerning his people, for he knew that he was the GOD of *Israel*. Thus the majesty of the LORD may awe some persons to do justice, who are not blessed with that fear of GOD which proceeds from love. Another way may be, by overruling providences, whereby men's minds are influenced

fluenced by various motives, to perform such things as are just and good to others; notwithstanding, they have not so much as the awe of GOD's majesty upon their own hearts: but their minds are directed by a sovereign hand, though themselves are ignorant whence it proceeds; nor are their designs upright at the same time. *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; as the rivers of water he turneth it whither soever he will.* But the way in which GOD is pleased to favour some people in their governors, is, by blessing those governors with the true knowledge, love, and fear of GOD himself; these are a blessing indeed; who according to the commandment of the LORD, read diligently in his law, as it is written, *He shall read therein all the days of his life.* These are qualified in truth; they act from righteous motives, being guided by righteous precepts; they reign by the KING of saints; by his authority, by his direction, in his fear, for his glory, and the good of his people. *A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment, scattereth away all evil with his eyes.*

7. Those princes and potentates whose reign is not prosperous, are at the sovereign disposal of the almighty head of dominion; he has appointed the powers for punishment as well as protection; and as righteous princes punish the crimes of individuals, for the peace and safety of society, so when the LORD sees good to punish the iniquity of

of a nation, he directs the instruments by his own wisdom, to execute his own purposes. Sometimes he withholds wisdom or success from faithful rulers, for a chastisement to the people; as he did to his servant *Josiah*, who fell at *Meggido*, that the appointed wrath might come upon a hypocritical people. Sometimes GOD is pleased to give the power to fools, or cowards, who suffer ruin to come upon the people for want of conduct, like king *Abaz*, who gave his treasures to the king of *Affyria*, who was not his friend; and sacrificed to the gods of his enemies which smote him. Sometimes the LORD sets up proud imperious princes, who distress their countries under pretext of maintaining them; as *Amaziab* king of *Judah*, when he took advice to see the king of *Israel* in the face; by which means himself was made prisoner, and *Jerusalem* taken, and spoiled. Thus, the pride of *Pharaoh* contended with GOD, till all the excellency of *Egypt* was destroyed. Sometimes the power is put into the hands of slothful persons, who neglect their duty; or into the hands of the covetous, or luxurious, who oppress their own subjects, whom they ought to defend and nourish. *Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning.* Sometimes brutish persons are exalted to dignity, who neither fear GOD, nor regard man; as *Manasseh*, who filled *Jerusalem* with all manner of abominations, idolatry, and innocent blood. *The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest of men are exalted.*

And sometimes it pleases GOD to give a people into the hand of foreign invaders, and usurping tyrants, as he delivered *Judab* into the hand of *Shishak* king of *Egypt*, for which he gave this reason, *That they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.* And in their turn, gave the *Egyptians* into the hand of their enemies, saying, *And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord, and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts.* But still the whole disposing is of the LORD; he advanced *Caiphas* to the priesthood, *Pontius Pilate* to the government, and *Herod* to the tetrarchy, at such a period, *For to do whatsoever his hand and his counsel determined before to be done.* For tho' the wickedness is of themselves, and must be hated of the GOD of truth, yet he, in infinite wisdom, makes that wickedness subservient to his own good purposes, as he said to Pharaoh, *And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth;* as also of the king of Assyria, *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, &c.* Yet GOD has no communion with these wicked instruments, nor they with him; only he turns them with his curb, as he pleases. *I will put my book in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips.* Thus they do the
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will of GOD unknown to themselves, while they are eagerly pursuing their own wills, to their ruin. *Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.* The LORD gives the power into their hands ; for *The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.* He gives them a capacity to hold their authority, and keep the people in subjection ; this is a gift from GOD, and tho' they do not use it in the fear of GOD, or to the benefit of men, but consume it upon their lust, yet it is his pleasure to continue it to them, until they have gone so far as to be appointed, and then he turns them back, or casts them away, as a despised broken idol. *Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the LORD hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.*

III. In the third place, I would attempt to prove, That all powers and governments upon earth are ordained, sustained, and regulated, by CHRIST, on his *Church's* behalf, and in subserviency to her welfare.

1. His church is the object of his superlative love, and ultimate delight. His love to her hath been ever of old ; *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* It is now the same, in full perfection, *for the LORD delighteth in thee ;* and his love continues the same for ever ; *having loved his own*

which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. He expresses the highest complaisancy in his people, saying, The LORD thy GOD in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing; yea, he hath not only expressed his love in words, but hath also given the strongest demonstration in his actions; greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; yet he says, I lay down my life for the sheep; — no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. Yea, he laid down his life of pure, free, spontaneous goodness, without any inducement on our part, or any worthiness in us; GOD commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us; and the apostle John exults in this very thing, as an undeniable proof of perfect love; herein is love, not that we loved GOD, but that he loved us, and sent his SON to be the propitiation for our sins. Further, this love was not manifest as a transient act of meer pity, but a constant series of delight; therefore he purchased his church with his own blood, and redeemed them to GOD, that they might be his own property; for the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance, he hath chosen them for his own peculiar treasure; blessed is the nation whose GOD is the LORD, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance; his church is his beloved spouse,
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thy maker is thine husband ; his joy and his glory, thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy GOD ; he cohabits with her for ever and ever, this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it ; he bestows every blessing, and withholds no good thing from his chosen ; he that spared not his own SON, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ; and he hath prepared for them a kingdom from the foundation of the world ; and there is reserved in heaven for them, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away ; where they shall sit down with him in his throne, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Hence we know that all things work together for good, to them that love GOD. Does not a man so rule and direct all his servants, as may be for the good, the pleasure, and comfort of her who is the wife of his bosom, the delight of his eyes ? and regulate all the affairs of his household, for her commodity and satisfaction ? so, the LORD JESUS, having his ultimate delight placed in his people, and being perpetually attentive to their felicity, and having the whole creation of GOD in subjection under his feet, he will certainly govern all those powers in such a manner, as to answer the most salutary purposes to the heirs of glory ; his promise to them is, *surely, blessing, I will bless thee ;* which contains blessings of every kind ; his church

is his holy mountain, and all the earthly powers are stationed round about her, by him who hath said, *I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing.*

2. As the church stands in so near a relation to the SON of GOD, whom the FATHER *hath appointed heir of all things*, the members thereof, by virtue of their union with him, become *heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST*; if they be heirs of GOD himself, of consequence, they must be heirs of all his works; and so Abraham is called *heir of the world*; and if they stand in the relation of a wife to him that is the sovereign king, they must possess the honours and privileges of a queen, which the HOLY GHOST gives to the church, saying, *on thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir*; a wife justly claims a right to whatsoever is in the possession of her husband, so the church claims an indisputable right to CHRIST, and to all that is in his hand; therefore the apostle says, without hesitation, *let no man glory in man; for all things are your's*; strongly implying, that whatsoever pertains to mankind, is ordered in suberviency to the church of GOD, and appointed for the use and service of GOD's people; and so it needs must be, for if all things were made for the SON of GOD, who is the head of the church, they must be for the members of his body. And hence, the apostle further adds, *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present,*

present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are CHRIST's, and CHRIST is GOD's ; and he also says in another place, to the same people, for all things are for your sakes ; therefore all dominion, rule, and government, that is exercised in the world, as it is under the despotic authority of CHRIST JESUS, it is for the sake of his redeemed ; — the FATHER gave all things into the hands of the SON, for this very end, that they might be servants to his church. The GOD of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the FATHER of glory, — hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all ; as the head is all to the members, and the body is all to the head ; as the husband is all to his wife, and the wife is all to her husband ; so CHRIST is all in all to his church, she possesses fulness of perfection in him, and his church is all in all to him, he enjoys fulness of delight in her ; so that the language of CHRIST is, I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are mine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. And the language of the church is, whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Thus like the virgin pair in Eden, they are replete in one another, and possess all other things in a way of subjection ; for the FATHER gave him to be the union-head of his church, and
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despotick head OVER all things TO his church; therefore the whole creation, from the highest to the lowest, is nothing more, and nothing less, than a perfect accommodation for the church's convenience, or a train of attendance to wait upon the queen, at the sovereign command of her royal husband, *who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of GOD; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him; therefore it is said of the angels, are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

3. GOD has made it abundantly manifest in his word, that by an uncontrollable hand, he disposes the whole race of mankind, and particularly kings, rulers, states, and governments, for the good of his people. *GOD that made the world, — hath made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations.* But why hath the LORD made such an ample regulation, and fixed the stations of all the sons of men in such a determinate manner? it is for the sake of his elect whom he hath chosen, and redeemed. He hath appointed the stations of all his servants, so as they shall be ready at hand to perform every service that may be necessary, either for his church in general, or for any individual member; *when the MOST HIGH divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the*
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sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel; so that there is not a man nor a woman upon earth, but who, in their generation, are fulfilling their work for the service of the church of GOD; and tho' it may seem very remote, and in a way to us unknown, it is not unknown to him, whose ways of providence are as a wheel in the middle of a wheel; *Judah is my law-giver, Moab is my wash-pot*; every nation obeys the command, or is made to bow to the will of GOD, on the behalf of his people; *for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.* The Holy One has made the difference between his own people, and the rest of the world; and the children of GOD know this difference, and can plead with him, *We are thine; thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.* Yet, he bears such an authority over all the world, as to dispose of them, according to his pleasure, *for his body's sake, which is the church.* Therefore he says, *I am the LORD thy GOD, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour, I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. — For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.* All kings, princes, nobles, and judges of the earth, are under the same subjection to the SON of GOD, to attend the business of his church. GOD raised up, and blessed Cyrus; but for what

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intent? This is the reason given, *For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect.* If they attempt to exceed the bounds of their commission, to hurt the saints, he rebukes them at his pleasure; *yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.* If his people want any favour, which is in the power of princes to grant, they are, under the special direction of the Almighty SOVEREIGN, ready at hand to fulfil their charge; *for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of GOD, the GOD of Israel.* Yea, they are made ready to perform every kind office; devoted, as ministers, or servants in waiting, to attend the children of the KING of glory; and *Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their Queens thy nursing mothers.*

If it should be objected, That the worldly powers have frequently been enemies to the saints, and the disciples of JESUS have often been heavy sufferers under them;

I reply, This objection is of no force, unless the objector can subjoin, that those disciples of JESUS were such obedient children, that they never wanted correction: and further, that he is so wise as to point out, at least, some of those sufferings from whence no good proceeded to the saints. Is it a proof, that a tutor is not guided by the father's direction, because sometimes he corrects the child?

child? Or, that a subordinate magistrate is not under the direction of his Majesty, because, upon some occasions, he exercises severities upon certain of his subjects?

The LORD hath said, *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes;* and he makes use of what instrument he pleases for their correction. And his love to them appears in his chastisements, as well as in other acts of kindness; for the apostle declares, that he does it *for our profit*. Therefore, GOD having frequently made use of potentates, and magistrates, to chastise his people, is as much a proof of their being set up, and maintained in their stations, for the church's sake, as any other part of their service. Yea, when they have hated, and violently persecuted them, the LORD hath turned it for good; not so much for correction, as for trial, and for spreading the truth of the gospel. It is observed, upon the persecution that arose at the stoning of Stephen, *They that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word;* and Paul says, concerning the bonds which he suffered at Rome, *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;* so that, as long as JESUS reigns, and his church adorns the earth, let the designs of the earthly

powers be what they will, it shall still be said, *The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

IV. In the fourth place, I shall draw a few inferences, by way of instruction, or admonition, to such as fear GOD, and know that universal Sovereignty rests in the hand of GOD's Holy One, EMMANUEL.

I. To him belongs the glory, honour, and praise, and to him we are bound to give thanks for the manifold blessings which we enjoy in a happy and gracious government. The blessings with which *Great Britain* has been favoured, in that respect, for above seventy years past, are indisputably equal (and it is my humble opinion, superior) to any thing of the kind, that, for so long a period, any history can furnish us with, or that ever any nation had to boast; and that this day should afford us so comfortable a prospect of the continuance of these blessings, in a King and Queen, so well approved, that, in them, we may hope to see the same virtues shine, and, under them, enjoy the same privileges, as we have done in the days of their Predecessors. This is a fresh obligation to gratitude, to him that is the sole Author of these mercies, and cannot be disregarded by us, without manifest contempt of his goodness. May we, therefore, rejoice in the LORD, and ascribe all glory to his name! as Israel did upon a like

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occasion, *They blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.*

2. Forasmuch as the supreme power is in the hands of CHRIST for ever and ever, we hence may learn to trust in him for all blessings to come, as well as acknowledge the present and the past. His loving-kindness to his people is perpetually the same, *his mercy endureth for ever*; and in this alone centers our continual safety. *I am the LORD, I change not*; therefore, *ye sons of Jacob, are not consumed*. We have no reason to distrust his goodness, and perpetual care of his people, while we read his faithfulness to his ancient inheritance, or remember his multiplied favours and deliverances to our own nation; but especially while his immutable promises stand upon record; saying of his vineyard (his church), *I the LORD do keep it*; *I will water it every moment*; *lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day*: and again, *As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem*; *defending also he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it*. His wisdom and power are infinite and eternal, and his truth endureth to all generations; and to shew, that he never forgets his chosen people, he says, *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands*; *thy walls are continually before me*. Now, let us remember, that our sovereign LORD has received a charge from his FA-

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THER, *that of all that he hath given him, he should lose nothing; himself hath loved so as to give his life a ransom for them; and all his promises to them are, yea, and amen; therefore so long as one of his elect is in the world, he never will deliver up the reins of power out of his own hand; he says, I am alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and of death.*

3. If kings and princes are only instruments in the hands of the LORD, to be set up, or put down, at his pleasure, we ought to learn, not to repose our confidence, or place our trust in them; forasmuch as they are men, and not GOD; and our heavenly FATHER does not permit his own children to trust in any being but himself; he hath stated the contrast between the creature and himself, saying of the one, *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* and of the other, *Trust ye in the LORD for ever, for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.* And again, *curst be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.* The advanced stations in which the LORD is pleased to place some of his creatures above the rest, is no warrant to us to place our confidence in them, so long as GOD hath forbidden it; *put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help; and this prohibition is for our advantage,*
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because, *it is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in princes; for, men of high degree are a lie.* A person can have only one object of fixed confidence, therefore if we trust in any created being, we depart from GOD, and fall under that heavy charge, *they believed not in GOD, and trusted not in his salvation.*

4. Since all powers upon earth are in the hand of our LORD and SAVIOUR, and all their hearts and actions under his immediate command, this may teach us not to entertain any unnecessary fears concerning them; we have no occasion to perplex our minds with suspicions, respecting their wisdom or fortitude, counsels or conduct; for he by whom they possess their high stations, is all-sufficient to qualify them with all the courage and discretion that is necessary; and if, for wise reasons, he should be pleased to withhold, in some degree, the spirit of prudence, penetration, and magnanimity, from them, for the humiliation both of those in power, and the whole nation; have we any reason to distress ourselves, because he hath done what pleased him? Can we doubt his wisdom and goodness in such a proceeding? An overflow of prosperity is sometimes as dangerous as adversity; but whether we can discern the purposes of GOD in his dispensations or not, it is sufficient for us to know that it is the finger of GOD; and since we know that it is the fountain of perfection, that *formeth the spirit of man within him*, we have no
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reason to be dismayed, for tho' princes and potentates are as mountains in the earth, the LORD hath assured his church, *the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith thee LORD, that hath mercy on thee*;—and if a time should ever come, when it should please the LORD to set up governors, whose hearts should be turned to hate, and persecute his people; in this case we are commanded, *be not affraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do*. The believer's portion is not in this world, nor is it consistent with his high calling, to be anxious about either his life, or any temporal enjoyments; GOD is the consolation of his people, and whatever troubles may arise in the earth, they know *the LORD sitteth upon the flood*; and the LORD never fails in his promise; *thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee*.

5. Is JESUS, whom we acknowledge to be our king, the sovereign disposer of crowns and kingdoms? Then Christians ought not, by any means, or under any pretext whatever, to rebel against those powers which CHRIST hath set up; for that would be to rebel against the author of that government. This David well-knew, when he said, *who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless*? Our LORD JESUS commands all terrestrial powers, as he is the universal
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head of the creation ; but his spiritual kingdom, in which he stands, as the peculiar head of his church, is a distinct government, and the one does not interfere with the other ; forasmuch as the one is called secular power, and the other is called the kingdom of heaven ; and notwithstanding many professed Christians incline to unite or confound the two kingdoms, yet certainly they that are Christians indeed, cannot be ignorant of the distinction which CHRIST hath made ; *my kingdom is not of this world* ; therefore it is utterly foreign to the character of a Christian, to contend for magistracy, dignity, or posts of honour, in this world ; and by so much as any one makes any such attempt, he recedes from his profession as a Christian ; if his uprightness, prudence, or other qualifications, shall so recommend him that he is chosen, and appointed to the place of a magistrate, or any command of importance, let him fulfil his trust like a man of integrity ; for it is every man's duty, as a member of society, to contribute all in his power, whether in a public or private capacity, for the good of mankind, but not to strive for dominion : *the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them,—but ye shall not be so* ; neither under any religious pretext, are Christians to oppose their governors ; for no earthly government can either set up or pull down CHRIST's kingdom ; and all rebellion or opposition against the powers on that account, can proceed from no root but hypocrisy ; if they set up a false religion, we have no business

to oppose them, only avoid the corruption ourselves, observing his command, *follow thou me*. If they persecute us for non-conformity, we have no business to resist, but to submit to the penalties they please to inflict; only this licence is granted, *when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another*. I do not mean hereby to judge of national power, for without dispute, that power that puts a magistrate in authority, may, upon a just ground, displace him, without being charged with rebellion; but Christians, as such, belong to another kingdom, and have no right to contend about the dominion of this world; and to lift up a hand against our superiors, is to rebel against the king of Zion, by whom they reign. *The LORD forbid that we should do this thing,—seeing he is the anointed of the LORD*.

6. If the reign and government of Sovereigns be of the LORD, we ought not to murmur, and complain against their measures, and administration, for this would be ingratitude, and contempt of him that appointed them to fill those places. Though they appear to us to act weakly, yet we may have no knowledge of the reasons they have for their conduct; but if they should act weakly indeed, who gave, or who with-held wisdom from them? is it not the LORD? To reflect upon, and cast out invectives against the powers which it has pleased GOD to set over us, is a very pernicious practice, and is often attended with mischievous consequences. Sometimes it produces the seeds of rebellion, which
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may prove the ruin of the state ; and at least, as it proceeds from an unthankful, restless, dissatisfied mind, it naturally tends to fill others with the same evil dispositions, and so to deprive ourselves of the enjoyment of favours, and make the nation, or some of your fellow subjects, uncomfortable ; it is the character of the wicked, and left as a curse upon them, *they shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their GOD.* And again it is said, *these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.* Whereas we are commanded, *thou shalt not revile the gods (or governors) nor curse the ruler of thy people ;* which, when Paul had spoken unguardedly to the high-priest, he excused himself on account of his ignorance, that he was the high-priest, and in tenderness of conscience, repeated this law, *for it is written, thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people ;* and Solomon, by the HOLY GHOST, gives this counsel, *curse not the king, no not in thy thought.*

7. Seeing all the judges of the earth are guided by the counsel, or over-ruled by the power, and maintained by the authority of him to whom all judgment is committed by the FATHER ; this directs us to whom we are to look for a blessing upon them, and upon their jurisdiction ; and hence comes the admonition of the apostle, by the direction of the SPIRIT of GOD ; *I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a*

quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. It is from CHRIST alone, in whom all fulness resides, that all kings, princes, and nobles of every order, are blessed with valuable qualifications, or possess capacities suitable to their various functions; shall we, therefore, quarrel with them for want of those blessings, or reproach them because (it may be for our sins) the LORD hath withheld such favours from them? no, we are taught of GOD to look to him by prayer and supplication, to pour his blessings upon those he is pleased to set over us; for those blessings bestowed upon magistrates, are gifts from GOD bestowed upon the whole nation, country, or jurisdiction where they preside; and are as truly favours conferred upon ourselves, as upon those individuals to whom they are immediately given. Therefore the LORD commanded the captives in Babylon, saying, *seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.* Whosoever loves and fears GOD, will love, and desire the welfare of his country; and whosoever loves his country, will desire to see a prosperous and happy government; and as a Christian he is instructed *in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto GOD;* therefore, as the blessings of a wise and righteous government, are not the most inconsiderable, it was the ancient practice of GOD's people, to pray for their kings, whether they were of their own nation,

nation, or such by whom they had been subdued ; and this, Darius knew, when he gave orders for supplying the Jews with materials for the house of GOD ; wherein he thus expressed, *that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the GOD of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his sons.*

8. As there can be no government without obedience, the Supreme Governor of heaven and earth, who, for our benefit, has constituted a civil government in the world, has commanded us to obey the statutes of those in authority ; *put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers.* Disobedience to magistrates, is rebellion against GOD, inasmuch as they are his ministers, and representatives ; and it is pernicious to men, as it causes confusion in the state, and is a bad example to others : therefore it is the duty of every man, but especially of Christians, to pay a conscientious regard to all the commands of the legislative powers ; *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the LORD's sake ; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well ; for so is the will of GOD.* It is true, if magistrates should command any thing that is contrary to the express command of GOD, by so much they exceed their commission, and in that case, *we ought to obey GOD rather than man ;* but in every thing that is not repugnant to the word of GOD, in obeying them, we obey the king of heaven ; and thereby we acknowledge
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CHRIST our sovereign LORD; *wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

9. We ought to acknowledge the regal authority of CHRIST in them whom he hath appointed to be his agents to us, by supporting their government, in chearfully paying to them their due. It is the command of him, whom we confess, as our sovereign LORD and SAVIOUR, *Render therefore unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's, and unto GOD, the things which are GOD's.* Here our LORD acknowledges, that it was Cæsar's property, and did not charge it as oppression, but commanded to render him his due; therefore, to refuse to render to magistrates their due, when GOD has commanded it, is to withhold the things that are GOD's. For, *for this cause pay we tribute also, for they are GOD's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.* Therefore, tribute is their proper right, upon the same consideration, as a servant has a right to his wages, or a labourer to his hire; on the same ground *both the LORD ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel,* because they cannot otherwise live; being employed in one work, they cannot attend upon another business for their necessary supplies; neither can magistrates serve their country without a sufficient contribution, both for their own support, and for the necessary expences of the state, without which the nation must come to ruin. Therefore, to withhold the proper tribute, to murmur at the weight of taxes,

taxes, or to give countenance to any clandestine practices in merchandise, whereby the government is defrauded of the appointed custom, &c. is injustice in the sight of GOD and man; it justly renders that person unworthy the benefit of salutary laws, who refuses the necessary supplies of the legislators, and defenders of the state. For by the same laws, that governors have a right to their tribute, the owner holds his property; without which laws, it would be liable to be taken from him by the first son of violence, that should set his eye upon it. *Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom, to whom custom, fear, to whom fear, honour, to whom honour.*

10. Since our Heavenly KING has been pleased to bless us with earthly Princes, to preserve our peace, and defend our privileges and properties, it is our duty to defend them to the utmost of our power. That man is unworthy of a favour, who is not willing to exert the abilities, which GOD has given him, for the preservation of it. Therefore, if there be any thing in our power, whereby we may contribute to the support of the government, and the establishment of our happy constitution, it is our indispensable duty to do it. If we should know of any conspiracies, treasonable practices, or any thing that tends to undermine, or put the government in any kind of danger, we ought not to conceal it; for in so doing, we should become partakers with the wicked, traitors to the nation, and despisers of the author of our mercies.

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Neither ought we to have any hand, not so much as to give our voice, in an election, towards raising any person into a place of trust, but such as we have good ground to believe, are faithful to the nation, and loyal to his Majesty. Those treacherous persons, in the days of Nehemiah, who held a correspondence with his enemies, were esteemed traitors to GOD, and to the nation.—Also, if necessity requires, we ought to hazard our lives, in fighting in their defence, as well as they do in ours. Because *the children of Ephraim — turned back in the day of battle*, this charge is laid against them by the HOLY GHOST, *they kept not the covenant of GOD, and refused to walk in his law*. I know there be some persons, whose superstition leads them to deny the lawfulness of fighting, in a just cause, for the defence of the nation, putting a false gloss upon the words of JESUS, *They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword*; but this was never intended to prohibit the use of arms under the command of a lawful prince, but to admonish his disciples, never to attempt to propagate his spiritual kingdom by a carnal sword, nor to resist the powers which himself hath ordained to rule the nations of the world; but to remember that they belong to a different kingdom, which challenges no part of earthly dominion; *But now is my kingdom not from hence*. But this ought not, in any wise, to make them unuseful members of society, while they live in the world; therefore, it is not only lawful, but a bounden duty, to defend their king and country, when exposed to danger; *Zebulon and Naphtali were a people that jeopardded their lives unto the death, in the high places of the field*.

May the Blessing of the Most High GOD abide upon our KING and QUEEN, and all in Authority under them! and may all the Glory be ascribed to him, who is KING of kings, and LORD of lords. Amen.

